

**National Transportation Safety Board
Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1998
(October 1, 1997 through September 30, 1998)**

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I. Basic Information Regarding Report

- A. Name, title, address, and telephone number of person(s) to be contacted with questions about this report:

Melba D. Moyer
National Transportation Safety Board
Records Management/FOIA Officer
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594
(202) 314-6540

- B. Electronic address for this report on the World Wide Web:

<http://www.nts.gov/info/foia.htm>

- C. How to obtain a copy of this report in paper form:

Write to the following (include your mailing address in your request):

National Transportation Safety Board
Freedom of Information Act Officer
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594
(202) 314-6540

II. How to Make a FOIA Request

- A. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all individual agency components and offices that receive FOIA request:

National Transportation Safety Board
Freedom of Information Act Officer
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594
(202) 314-6540

B. Brief description of NTSB's response-time ranges:

Due to the mission of the Safety Board response-time ranges vary from one day to over a year, depending on the complexity of the request.

C. Brief description of why some requests are not granted:

Some requests are not granted because:

- request lacks information;
- requested record is not reasonably described;
- request poses a question;
- no records were responsive to the request;
- records had been previously destroyed and were no longer available;
- request was withdrawn;
- request was referred to another agency;
- a duplicate request was submitted; or
- one or more exemptions to the FOIA warranted withholding.

III. Definitions of Terms and Acronyms Used in this Report

A. Agency-specific acronyms or other items

NTSB - National Transportation Safety Board

B. Basic terms, expressed in common terminology

1. FOIA/PA request - Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act request. A FOIA request is generally a request for access to records concerning a third party, an organization, or a particular topic of interest. A Privacy Act request is a request for records concerning oneself; such requests are also treated as FOIA requests. (All requests for access to records, regardless of which law is cited by the requester, are included in this report.)

2. Initial Request - a request to a federal agency for access to records under the Freedom of Information Act.
3. Appeal - a request to a federal agency asking that it review at a higher administrative level a full denial or partial denial of access to records under the Freedom of Information Act or any other FOIA determination such as a matter pertaining to fees.
4. Processed Request or Appeal - a request or appeal for which an agency has taken a final action on the request or the appeal in all respects.
5. Multi-track processing - a system in which simple requests requiring relatively minimal review are placed in one processing track and more voluminous and complex requests are placed in one or more other tracks. Requests in each track are processed on a first-in/first-out basis. A requester who has an urgent need for records may request expedited processing (see below).
6. Expedited processing - an agency will process a FOIA request on an expedited basis when a requester has shown an exceptional need or urgency for the records which warrants prioritization of his or her request over other requests that were made earlier.
7. Simple request - a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in its fastest (non-expedited) track based on the volume and/or simplicity of records requested.
8. Complex request - a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in a slower track based on the volume and/or complexity of records requested.

9. Grant - an agency decision to disclose all records in full in response to a FOIA request.
10. Partial grant - an agency decision to disclose a record in part in response to a FOIA request, deleting information determined to be exempt under one or more of the FOIA's exemptions; or a decision to disclose some records in their entireties, but to withhold others in whole or in part.
11. Denial - an agency decision not to release any part of a record or records in response to a FOIA request because all the information in the requested records is determined by the agency to be exempt under one or more of the FOIA's exemptions, or for some procedural reason (such as because no record is located in response to a FOIA request).
12. Time limits - the time period in the Freedom of Information Act for an agency to respond to a FOIA request (ordinarily 20 working days from proper receipt of a "perfected" FOIA request).
13. "Perfected" request - a FOIA request for records which adequately describes the records sought, which has been received by the FOIA office of the agency or agency component in possession of the records, and for which there is no remaining question about the payment of applicable fees.
14. Exemption 3 statute - a separate federal statute prohibiting the disclosure of a certain type of information and authorizing its withholding under FOIA subsection (b)(3).
15. Median number - the middle, not the average, number. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the median number is 7.

16. Average number - the number obtained by dividing the sum of a group of numbers by the quantity of numbers in the group. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the average number is 8.

IV. Exemption 3 Statutes

A. List of Exemption 3 statutes relied on by NTSB during current fiscal year

1. Brief description of type(s) of information withheld under each statute:

a) 49 USC 1114(c) Any portion of a cockpit voice recording (CVR) or the portions of a transcript of a CVR that the Board did not find relevant to an investigation.

b) 49 USC 114(e) Any information relating to Board participation in foreign aircraft accidents, where the country conducting the investigation has not issued its report or 2 years has not elapsed from the date of the accident.

2. Statement of whether a court has upheld the use of each statute.

A court has not upheld the Exemption 3 statutes during this fiscal year.

V. Initial FOIA/PA Access Requests

A. Numbers of initial requests

1. Number of requests pending as of end of preceding fiscal year 106
2. Number of requests received during current fiscal year 553
3. Number of requests processed during current fiscal year 486

4. Number of requests pending as of end of current
fiscal year 173

(Enter this number also in Line VII.B.1.)

B. Disposition of initial requests

1. Number of total grants 264

2. Number of partial grants 110

3. Number of denials 112

a. number of times each FOIA exemption used
(counting each exemption once per request)

(1) Exemption 1	<u>0</u>
(2) Exemption 2	<u>1</u>
(3) Exemption 3	<u>3</u>
(4) Exemption 4	<u>22</u>
(5) Exemption 5	<u>64</u>
(6) Exemption 6	<u>44</u>
(7) Exemption 7(A)	<u>0</u>
(8) Exemption 7(B)	<u>0</u>
(9) Exemption 7(C)	<u>0</u>
(10) Exemption 7(D)	<u>0</u>
(11) Exemption 7(E)	<u>0</u>
(12) Exemption 7(F)	<u>0</u>
(13) Exemption 8	<u>0</u>
(14) Exemption 9	<u>0</u>

4. Other reasons for nondisclosure
(total) 26

a. no records	<u>3</u>
b. referrals	<u>19</u>
c. request withdrawn	<u>1</u>
d. fee-related reason	<u>0</u>

- e. records not reasonably described 2
- f. not a proper FOIA request for some other reason 0
- g. not an agency record 0
- h. duplicate request 1
- i. other (specify) 0

VI. Appeals of Initial Denials of FOIA/PA Requests

A. Numbers of appeals

- 1. Number of appeals received during fiscal year
0
- 2. Number of appeals processed during fiscal year
0

B. Disposition of appeals

- 1. Number completely upheld 0
- 2. Number partially reversed 0
- 3. Number completely reversed 0
 - a. number of times each FOIA exemption used
(counting each exemption once per appeal)
 - (1) Exemption 1 0
 - (2) Exemption 2 0
 - (3) Exemption 3 0
 - (4) Exemption 4 0
 - (5) Exemption 5 0
 - (6) Exemption 6 0
 - (7) Exemption 7(A) 0
 - (8) Exemption 7(B) 0
 - (9) Exemption 7(C) 0
 - (10) Exemption 7(D) 0

- | | |
|---------------------|----------|
| (11) Exemption 7(E) | <u>0</u> |
| (12) Exemption 7(F) | <u>0</u> |
| (13) Exemption 8 | <u>0</u> |
| (14) Exemption 9 | <u>0</u> |
4. Other reasons for nondisclosure (total)
- | | |
|--|----------|
| a. no records | <u>0</u> |
| b. referrals | <u>0</u> |
| c. request withdrawn | <u>0</u> |
| d. fee-related reason | <u>0</u> |
| e. records not reasonably described | <u>0</u> |
| f. not a proper FOIA request for some other reason | <u>0</u> |
| g. not an agency record | <u>0</u> |
| h. duplicate request | <u>0</u> |
| i. other | <u>0</u> |

VII. Compliance with Time Limits/Status of Pending Requests

A. Median processing time for requests processed during the year

1. Simple requests (if multiple tracks used).

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| a. number of requests processed | <u>314</u> |
| b. median number of days to process | <u>20</u> |

2. Complex request (specify for any and all tracks used)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| a. number of requests processed | <u>171</u> |
| b. median number of days to process | <u>29</u> |

3. Requests accorded expedited processing

- a. number of requests processed 1
- b. median number of days to process 100¹

B. Status of pending requests.

- 1. Number of requests pending as of end of current fiscal year 173
- 2. Median number of days that such requests were pending as of that date 105

VIII. Comparisons with Previous Year(s) (Optional)

- A. Comparison of numbers of requests received
- B. Comparison of numbers of request processed
- C. Comparison of median numbers of days requests were pending as of end of fiscal year
- D. Other statistics significant to agency
- E. Other narrative statements describing agency efforts to improve timeliness of FOIA performance and to make records available to the public. The NTSB continues to make a substantial amount of data available on its web site and through the publication of its reports and availability of public files (dockets) on every accident it investigates.

¹ The expedited request involved an extended search and compilation of a substantial number of documents. Subsequent to gathering the records a significant amount of time was required to process the records to ensure the proper application of the personal privacy interest exemption.

IX. Costs/FOIA Staffing

A. Staffing levels.

1. Number of full-time FOIA personnel 3.5
2. Number of personnel with part-time or occasional FOIA duties (in total work years) 1.5
3. Total number of personnel (in work-years) 5

B. Total costs (including staff and all resources).

1. FOIA processing (including appeals) \$221,686.00
2. Litigation-related activities (estimated)
\$7,771.00
3. Total costs \$229,457.00
4. Comparison with previous year(s) (including percentage of change) (optional)

C. Statement of additional resources needed for FOIA compliance (optional)

The significant growth in the number of FOIA requests is expected to require the assignment of at least one additional FTE to this function.

X. Fees

- A. Total amount of fees collected by agency for processing requests 0²
- B. Percentage of total costs

XI. FOIA Regulations (Including Contractor Fee Schedule)

² To the substantial extent FOIA requests apply to information the NTSB holds publicly available (such as publications and public docket files), fees are assessed by our contractor.